

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5416

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR
SUBJECT: FOOD SUPPLY SITUATION IN SAMARKAND, TASHKENT AND DUSHANBE

SUMMARY: CONSOFF WHO VISITED THE CENTRAL ASIAN CITIES OF SAMARKAND, TASHKENT, AND DUSHANBE FROM APRIL 9-16 FOUND SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN THE FOOD SUPPLY SITUATIONS OF THE THREE CITIES. DUSHANBE'S FOOD SITUATION APPEARED TO BE RELATIVELY GOOD WHILE SAMARKAND'S WAS ADEQUATE AND TASHKENT'S ABYSMAL. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSOFF VISITING DUSHANBE APRIL 15 FOUND THAT FOOD SUPPLY WAS RELATIVELY GOOD. SEVERAL VARIETIES OF KOLBASA WERE AVAILABLE AT 1.90 R TO 2.10 R PER KILO. SUPPLIES OF FRESH AND FROZEN CHICKEN, SOME APPARENTLY IMPORTED FROM HOLLAND, WERE PRICED AT 2.50 R TO 3.20 R PER KILO. FRESH AND FROZEN FISH OF SEVERAL TYPES SOLD FOR FROM .40 K TO 1.20 R PER KILO. BEEF WAS IN SHORT SUPPLY, BUT PORT CUTLETS SOLD FOR 14 K/100 GRAMS. EGGS IN ADEQUATE SUPPLY WERE PRICED AT 10 FOR 1/30 R. SEVERAL VARIETIES OF CHEESE SOLD FOR 2.00 R TO 2.90 R PER KILO. MILK AND BUTTER IN ADEQUATE SUPPLY SOLD FOR 24 K/LITER AND .68 K/200 GRAMS RESPECTIVELY. A WIDE VARIETY OF BREADS SOLD FOR 16 K, 18 K, AND 21 K PER KILO.

2. FOOD SUPPLIES ON SALE IN THE SAMARKAND BAZAAR ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 14 WERE ADEQUATE, BUT PRICES WERE HIGH. BEEF
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IN ADEQUATE SUPPLY SOLD FOR 3.80 R/KILO WHILE SEVERAL VARIETIES OF FROZEN FISH SOLD FOR 35 K TO 40 K PER KILO. SCRAWNY CHICKENS WERE ON SALE LIVE FOR OUTRAGEOUSLY INFLATED PRICES RANGING FROM 8 R TO 10 R PER CHICKEN. ONE ENTERPRISING SALESMAN WAS HAWKING FIVE EMACIATED CHICKENS FOR 43 RUBLES. MUTTON IN WHAT APPEARED TO BE SHORT SUPPLY SOLD FOR 6 R/KILO, AND PORK WAS NOT FOR SALE IN PRIMARILY MUSLIM SAMARKAND. EGGS SOLD 10 FOR 1.70 R. SUPPLIES

OF VEGETABLES AND DRIED FRUITS WERE GOOD. POTATOES SOLD FOR 60 K/KILO WHILE TOMATOES AND CUCUMBERS WERE CONSIDERABLY MORE EXPENSIVE AT 6 R/KILO. APPLES SOLD FOR 4 R/KILO, AND ONIONS WENT FOR 20 K/200 GRAMS. BREAD OF ALL TYPES WAS AVAILABLE AT 16 K TO 24 K PER KILO.

3. IREX EXCHANGEES LIVING IN TASHKENT TOLD REPORTING OFFICER THAT THE FOOD SITUATION IN TASHKENT HAD BEEN MISERABLE ALL WINTER. MEAT WAS VIRTUALLY UNAVAILABLE FROM THE NOVEMBER 7 HOLIDAY TO JANUARY 1, AND CHEESE WAS ALSO IN CRITICALLY SHORT SUPPLY. FINALLY A SHIPMENT OF CANNED PORK, WHICH MUSLIM UZBEKS WOULD NOT EAT, APPEARED IN THE CITY'S GASTRONOMES. THE QUALITY, HOWEVER, WAS SO POOR THAT EVEN THE RUSSIANS AND OTHER NON-MUSLIMS OF TASHKENT REFUSED TO BUY IT.

4. THE EXCHANGEES HAVE HEARD SEVERAL EXPLANATIONS OF THE FOOD SHORTAGE FROM SOVIET ACQUAINTANCES. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, CHEESE SUPPLIES WERE CRITICALLY SHORT BECAUSE ALL THREE OF UZBEKISTAN'S CHEESE FACTORIES WERE ALLOWED TO CLOSE FOR REPAIRS AT THE SAME TIME. ANOTHER SOURCE TOLD THE EXCHANGEES THAT MEAT SHORTAGES IN UZBEKISTAN ARE INEVITABLE BECAUSE CENTRAL PLANNERS ALLOCATE ONLY 17 KILOS OF MEAT PER YEAR TO RESIDENTS OF UZBEKISTAN WHILE CITIZENS OF OTHER REPUBLICS ARE ALLOCATED SIGNIFICANTLY MORE MEAT PER CAPITA. THE EXCHANGEES THEMSELVES HAVE CONCLUDED THAT TASHKENT IS CHRONICALLY SHORT OF FOOD BECAUSE THE HIGH RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH HAS OUTSTRIPPED THE CITY'S SUPPLY SYSTEM.

5. A VISIT TO THE TASHKENT BAZAAR AT MIDDAY ON APRIL 16 CON-
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FIRMED THE AMERICAN EXCHANGEES' STATEMENTS ABOUT FOOD SHORTAGES. BEEF OF VERY LOW QUALITY AND IN EXTREMELY SHORT SUPPLY SOLD FOR 2.90 R/KILO. PORK FATBACK AT 41 K/KILO WAS ALSO IN SHORT SUPPLY. SEVERAL TYPES OF FISH AT 35 K TO 60 K/KILO WERE IGNORED BY SHOPPERS. GREAT AMOUNTS OF OBVIOUSLY HORRIBLE KOLBASA AT 46 K/KILO ATTRACTED NO ONE WHILE A LONG LINE STOOD BEFORE THE COUNTERS WHERE SOMEWHAT BETTER KOLBASA SOLD FOR 2.20 R AND 2.50 R PER KILO. BUTTER IN GOOD SUPPLY SOLD FOR 3.50 R/KILO WHILE 10 EGGS SOLD FOR 1.60 R. STAPLES SUCH AS MACARONI (50 K AND 56 K PER KILO) AND RICE (1.60 R/KILO) WERE IN GOOD SUPPLY. BREAD OF SEVERAL TYPES WAS IN GOOD SUPPLY AT 16 K AND 20 K PER LOAF, AND FRESH VEGETABLES OF SEVERAL TYPES WERE IN GOOD SUPPLY. POTATOES SOLD FOR 70 K/KILO WHILE TOMATOES WENT FOR 8 R/KILO. TOON

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